

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 953
By Burks

A RESOLUTION to honor and congratulate Mrs. Lena Plunkett Kestner on the celebration of her 101st birthday.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pay tribute to those citizens who are celebrating special occasions in their estimable lives; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Lena Plunkett Kestner will celebrate her 101st birthday on July 4, 2000, a milestone that will be commemorated as yet another precious souvenir of life's rich pageant; and

WHEREAS, the daughter of the late James L. and Lou Robinson Whitaker, Mrs. Kestner was born July 4, 1899 in the Lafayette community and was raised in Cookeville, as one of six children; and

WHEREAS, Lena Verda Whitaker began her teaching career just twelve days after her seventeenth birthday. She received her elementary teaching certificate whereby she taught school at New Salem near her home, and graduated from high school a year later. Miss Whitaker received her high school diploma by taking a county examination in 1922 and received her high school teaching certificate after her high school graduation; and

WHEREAS, Lena Whitaker taught a total of 48 years, teaching at Ensor, Gentry, Boma, Buffalo Valley, Gentry Junior High, Hopewell and Baxter Seminary, all in Putnam County,

Lascassas, Eagleville and Overall in Rutherford County, and 21 years in Lafayette; during that time she received her Bachelor of Science degree in English and History at Tennessee Polytechnic Institute in Cookeville, having begun her studies there when it was still known as Dixie College; and

WHEREAS, having retired from teaching our state's children in 1965, Lena Plunkett is able to reminisce on a roster of thousands of students taught, seeing two former students become principals, Hooper Crawford at Baxter Elementary, who later became her "boss", and Arnold L. Brown at Upperman High School; and

WHEREAS, Lena Whitaker married her first husband, Lem Plunkett, in 1942, and after two years of idyllic marriage, he died suddenly in 1945; Mrs. Plunkett remained a widow for 36 years, until she succumbed to the persistent proposals of Roby Edgar Kestner, a childhood sweetheart, whom she first met in 1917 and married on September 18, 1981 at the Summerfield Methodist Church; and

WHEREAS, as newlyweds, Lena and R.E. Kestner, age 82 and 89 respectively, then moved to Tallahassee, where Mr. Kestner had worked in real estate before retiring; Mr. Kestner died in 1986 and Mrs. Kestner returned to Cookeville in 1987; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Kestner involved herself in civic and political affairs during her career and beyond; she was a voting official for twenty-one years in Lafayette, for five years in Cedar Hill, and Treasurer of the Putnam Democratic Women's Club for several years. She was a charter member of "Older Democrats of Tennessee"; and

WHEREAS, Lena Kestner served with acumen and alacrity to educate generations of students in the Upper Cumberland area, in which position she earned the respect of her peers and supervisors alike for the superior quality of her work; "Miss Lena's" dedication and talent as a teacher have inspired thousands of young Tennesseans to pursue excellence in their lives; and

WHEREAS, as Lena Kestner approaches her eleventh decade, she is still an active and productive member of society, participating in various civic and community events, as her health permits; and

WHEREAS, we wish to take this golden opportunity to specially recognize one of Tennessee's most outstanding citizens on this very special occasion; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we honor and congratulate Mrs. Lena Plunkett Kestner on the impending celebration of 101st birthday and extend to her our best wishes for much continued success and happiness.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.